

# Practitioners care, but do institutions?

The gap between policy and  
practice in widening  
participation



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# EQUAL PRACTICES?

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WP PRACTICES IN PRE AND POST-92 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

THE STUDY SET OUT TO EXPLORE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN WIDENING PARTICIPATION POLICY AND PRACTICES ACROSS DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

A PRE-92 AND POST-92 INSTITUTION FROM EACH CITY WAS SELECTED

DUE TO POLICY DIFFERENCES, THE FOCUS WAS ONLY ON ENGLAND



WHERE ARE THE INSTITUTIONS LOCATED?

## PHASE 1

THE 2016-17 ACCESS AGREEMENTS WERE ANALYSED TO IDENTIFY COMMON THEMES AND DIFFERENCES



# PHASE 2

WHO WAS INTERVIEWED?



EIGHT PRE-92  
STAFF FROM  
OUTREACH TEAMS

EIGHT POST-92  
STAFF FROM  
OUTREACH TEAMS

TWELVE OF THE  
PARTICIPANTS WORKED  
IN INSTITUTIONS FROM THE  
INITIAL SAMPLE AND FOUR  
FROM THE WIDER  
SECTOR

THIRTEEN  
FEMALES  
THREE MALES

THREE BAME

1 MONTH TO 17 YEARS IN  
WORKING IN WP

ALL DEGREE  
EDUCATED



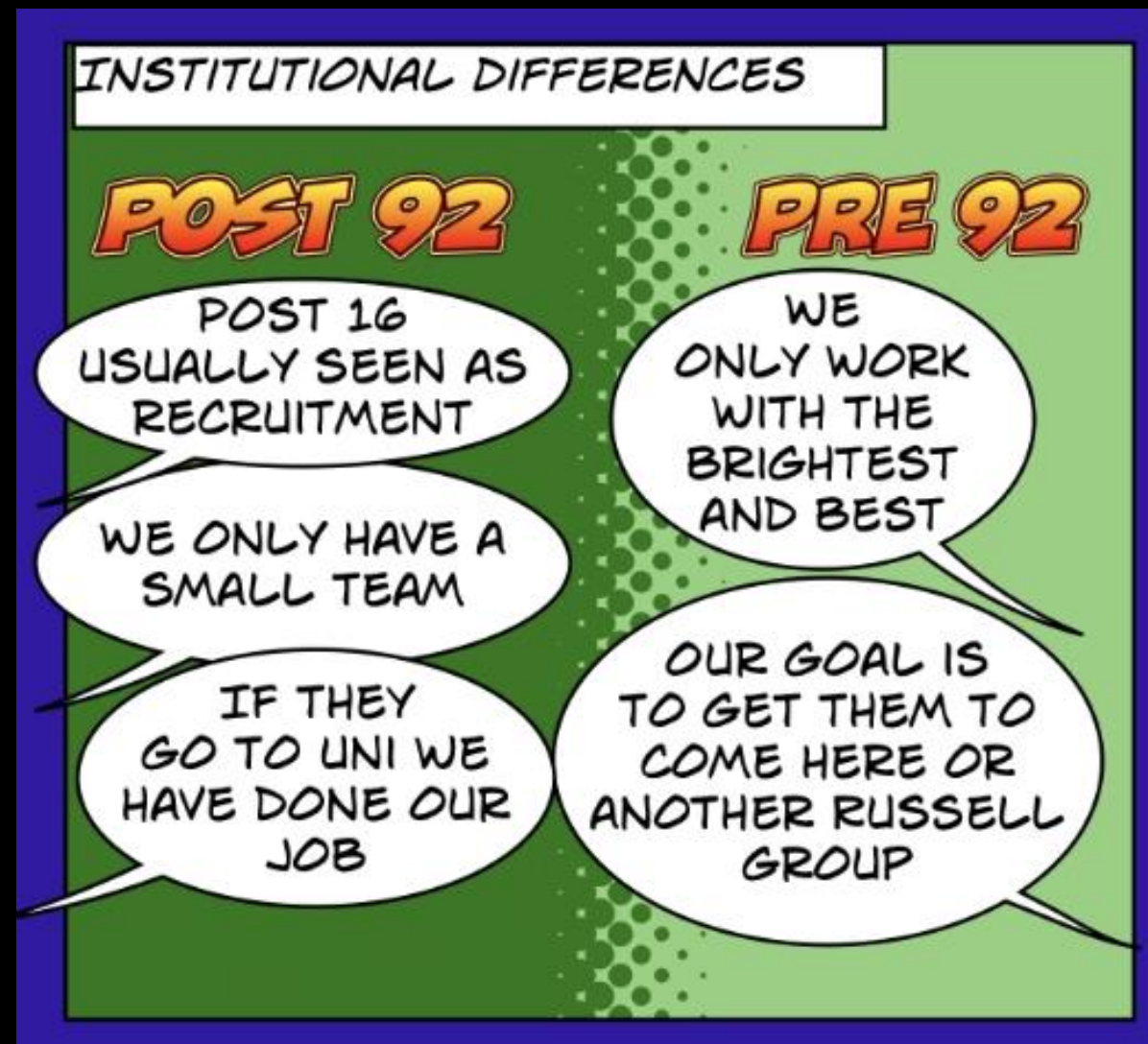
THE  
PRACTITIONERS  
WERE INTERVIEWED  
ABOUT THEIR WORK,  
CAREERS,  
UNDERSTANDINGS OF  
ASPIRATION AND  
TARGETING OF WP  
WORK



THE INTERVIEWS ALSO INCLUDED  
CREATIVE TASKS TO DISCUSS  
SOME OF THE THEMES ARISING  
FROM PHASE 1

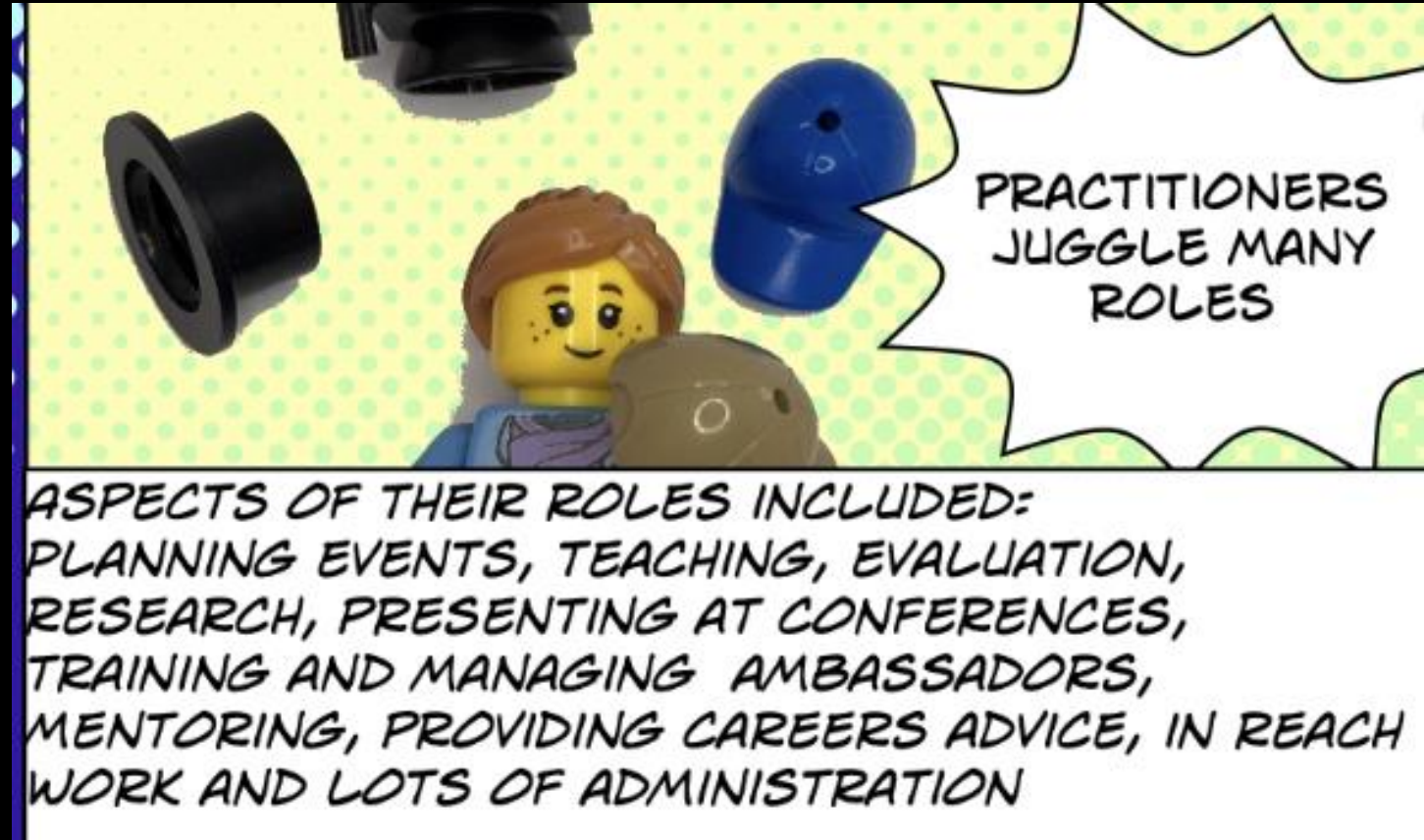
# The same but different

- More clear differences in texts than interviews
- Practitioners generally more focused on the needs of individuals they work with
- All focused on issues of access to their institutions to a greater or lesser extent
- Tension with recruitment was a recurrent theme in interviews especially in terms of resource allocation



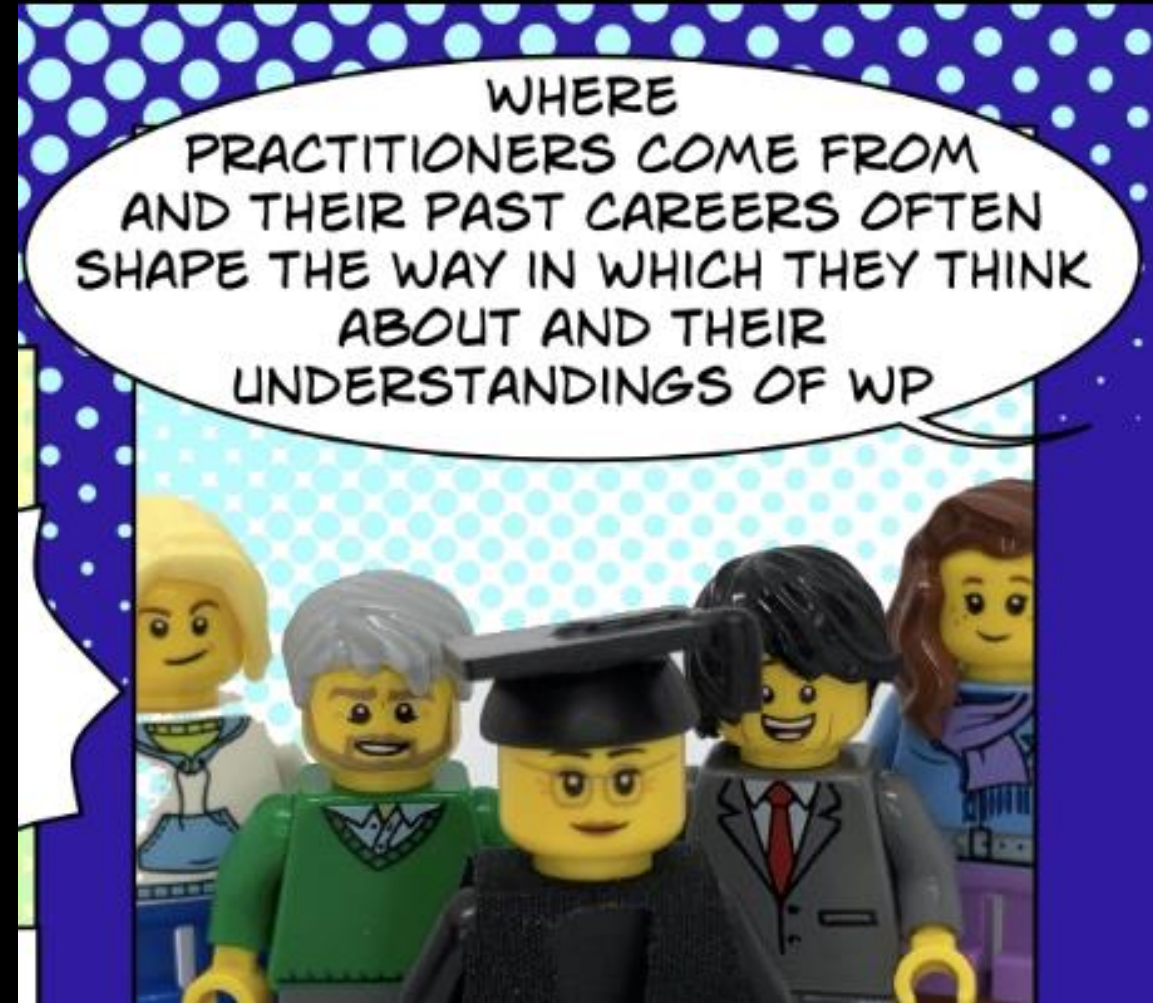
# Policy has created a role that is complex

- Issues of time and capacity seemed to be worse in smaller teams
- Time was a significant barrier to engagement with policy and evaluation
- The sense of doing more with less and the increasing reactivity of work was a clear theme



# Does it matter who delivers?

- Wide range of routes in:
- Varied Educational Backgrounds
- The 'accidental' WP practitioner
  - For some, first career
  - Ex-Teachers / FE lecturers
  - Careers practitioners
  - Marketing



# 'Raising Aspirations?'

- Used in every access agreement analysed but to a varying extent
- On average mentioned more by pre-92 institutions
- Extensive literature critiquing the idea



THERE ARE LOTS OF CHALLENGES PRACTITIONERS FACE....

WE NEED TO INTERACT WITH MORE STUDENTS

WE NEED TO RECRUIT MORE STUDENTS

I WANT TO BE A PLUMBER

MY SCHOOL NEEDS....



POLICY CHANGES

TIME TO REFLECT

RAISE ATTAINMENT

DO MORE OUTREACH

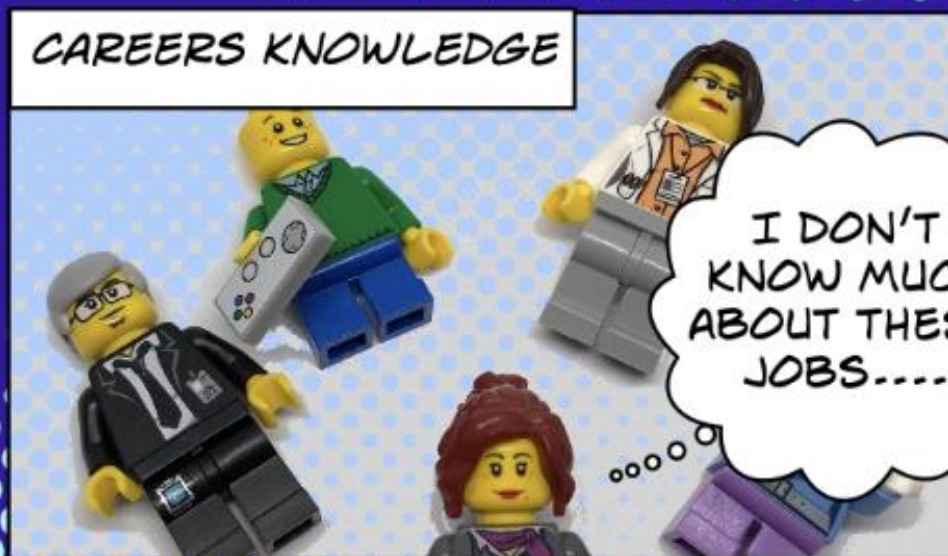
THE SPEED OF POLICY CHANGES WAS A CONCERN FOR MANY

WHILST MOST EVALUATED THEIR WORK, FEW HAD TIME TO PROPERLY REFLECT ON THIS EVALUATION



CAREERS KNOWLEDGE

I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THESE JOBS....





# Questions and Discussion

- Do these issues resonate with you?
- Which do you think are the most pressing?
- Is the problem at a local or national level?
- How do we begin to address them?



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